

the Public Merits of Mr. Pitt, a work of an irony so subtle that it was at times in danger of being mistaken for panegyric. Indeed, his friend Dr. Darwin, in acknowledging a presentation copy, suggested the use of a new mark of punctuation to indicate irony: 'as, for instance, a note of admiration inverted, or some other mark which should admonish the cursory reader of what he had to expect'. There is no reason to suspect Dr. Darwin in this of being himself ironical. But his suggestion was not adopted.

This pamphlet was to have been embellished with two etchings; one of them 'a column decorated with death's heads, leaning on one side, with a gaping fissure at its base, threatening to crush the bystanders in its fall; and containing a short inscription to Mr. Pitt'. But this excursion of Dr. Beddoes into pictorial art was for some reason never carried out. There followed, however, in the same year (1796) a second onslaught on the Government, *A Letter to Mr. Pitt on the Scarcity*, in which he put forward the ingenious project of guarding against famine by feeding our cattle on carrots and potatoes instead of grass and hay. If this seems at first sight a scheme worthy of the Island of Laputa, it may be explained that by this means, in case of scarcity, we could feed not only on our cattle but on their food. However, this brave plan seems to have gone the unregarded way of Dr.

Darwin's in-
verted marks of admiration. And in 1797,
with a final
pamphlet entitled *Alternatives Compared; or,
What shall the
Rich do to be Safe* (a point in which the Rich
have seldom
needed much instruction), the Doctor laid
aside the
mantle of Demosthenes.

There had been yet other side-shows in
these years, such
as a design for Rational Toys (geometrical
forms and
models of machinery) to be financed by
subscriptions, of